

How the West has Moved on:

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT

LINCOLN, SEPTEMBER 27, 1877,

DURING THE

Nebraska State Fair,

And upon the invitation of the State Board of Agriculture,

BY

Prof RODNEY WELCH,

OF THE CHICAGO TIMES.

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PUBLISHED BY THE  
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## ADDRESS.

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### HOW THE WEST HAS MOVED ON.

*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

During my childhood, passed on a rocky hill-side farm in the Pine-Tree state, an event occurred which left a lasting impression on my memory. It was the departure from the neighborhood of a family for the then far west, the northern portion of the state of Illinois. The head of the family was a restless, uneasy man who believed there was no place like one a long way from his native home. He had sought by various occupations and in several places to better his condition with only indifferent success. His heart was always in some imaginary highlands, far removed from the hills within his view. He loved nothing so well as to talk with sailors and to read books of travels. On one occasion he went to a seaport town to exchange some russet apples for codfish, then, as now, a staple article of diet in old New England. While there he met a miner who had just returned from the Black Hills of those days, the lead-bearing cliffs about Galena. From him he learned of the marvelous beauty and fertility of the valley of the Rock river in Illinois. He came back and immediately began to set his house out of order. He found a picture of a prairie schooner in Olney's geography, and gave an order to a wheelwright to construct one. Then he sought to trade his oxen and cows for a span of horses. As people heard of his proposed adventure, they began to remonstrate with him; they declared the journey too long and hazardous to be undertaken by a delicate woman and young children. They informed him that the country abounded with ague, poisonous plants, rattlesnakes, savage beasts, and yet more savage men. Farmer Greeley had not then spoken the words that did so much toward settling up the prairies, but this man had resolved "to go west and grow up with the country." He vowed that he never would pick stones another day in his life nor spend another winter in a place where there were "six weeks sleighing in March."

When people saw that remonstrances were in vain they began to consider what could be done to provide for the temporal and



religious wants of the family. Books devoted to morality, articles of clothing, and bottles of medicine, were sent in without stint. When the morning for the departure came, a meeting, previously announced, was held in the old church, situated as many ancient churches in New England are, at the rear of a graveyard, in order to present a cheerful appearance. Every seat was filled, the family of adventurers occupying the front pew, ordinarily reserved for mourners at a funeral. The minister, a grave and solemn man, opened the exercises by reading an account of the departure of the Israelites from the land of Egypt. In remarks that followed the scripture lesson, he stated that the journey about to be undertaken by the people before him, was longer than that from Goshen to the Valley of the Jordan, and promised to be more perilous than the voyage of the Pilgrim fathers. After a doleful hymn had been sung the entire congregation knelt in prayer for the preservation of the people who were taking their final leave. When they had been assisted to enter their canvas covered wagon the women presented the mother with a bible, while a man possessed of more worldly wisdom than piety handed the father a double-barreled gun and powder-flask. Finally, we bashful boys brought our offerings of primroses, lilacs, and sweet ferns and gave them to the pale-faced little girls whose eyes were moist with tears. Then the strange-looking vehicle started over the western hills, and the people repaired to their homes as mourners return from the burial of a friend.

#### WHERE IS THE WEST OF TO DAY?

It is no longer on the banks of the Rock, the Mississippi, the Des Moines or the Missouri,—it is following the course of the Platte and Kansas to their mountain sources. Men who moved “out west” from Massachusetts and New York a few years ago now find themselves “away down east.” I was in Western Kansas a few years ago, and heard a farmer complain of the cost of moving crops to an eastern market. I asked him where the eastern market was, and he gave me the name of a town upon the Mississippi river. I realized then that the words East and West, like the words heat and cold, were relative, not absolute, terms. The frontier line has been moving westward at the rate of five degrees for every decade. To-day the shepherd tends his flock on the prairie where the wandering Indian pursued the buffalo a few months ago. The wild fowls leave a secluded spot

in the fall to migrate to a milder climate; they return in the spring and find the place dotted over with white cabins. Some new settlers took advantage of their brief absence and "jumped their claims." Were some Rip Van Winkle to indulge in a two years' sleep on a western prairie he would not recognize the place when he awoke. Every thing would have changed more in this brief time than they changed during twenty years in that sleepy Dutch town at the foot of the Catskills, which was immortalized by the genius of Irving. Villages succeeded hamlets, towns became cities, with such wonderful rapidity that maps and census tables afford but little information of the development of the country.

As your guest, I rejoice with you in the prosperity of this new state. I see before me the men who turned the first furrows, sowed the first grain and gathered the first harvest in this beautiful region. I behold the men who caught the winged seed that were flying in the air from which have sprung trees as beautiful, if not as stately, as the cedars of Lebanon. I see the men who planted the first orchards on this side of the Missouri, whose fruit at the Centennial Exhibition was the admiration of representatives of forty states and territories, as well as from fifty foreign nations. Persons listen to my poor words who saw cities spring from the earth, not at the music of a harp, but at the harsh sound of hammers. I speak to men who brought hither in prairie schooners the first few pecks of grain whose increase has filled fleets of vessels bound for lands across the sea. I am, with the herdsmen who drove the first stock to this vast pasture, supplied with salt as well as water by the bounty of nature, whose cattle on a single prairie outnumber those the old Patriarch saw on the thousand hills of distant Judea. Nebraska, a tottering child in years, is a full grown giant in strength and development.

#### THE IMPORT OF THESE CHANGES.

What does this surpassing progress imply? That the whole country is increasing in wealth, prosperity, and population? Not at all. Omaha goes up because Salem goes down. Valley farms are opened in Nebraska for the reason that hill farms are abandoned in Massachusetts. Lands in the new West rise in value in the ratio that lands in the old East fall in value. Men come here because they leave there. They choose to "go west and grow up with the country" rather than stay in the East and go down with

the country. As wheat fields extend back from the banks of the Missouri they recede from the shores of the Atlantic. As your corn fields encroach on the domains of the buffalo, trees and bushes encroach on the fields long planted with cultivated crops on the Eastern slope of the Alleghanies. As the acreage in plants used for human food increases in the valley of the Platte and Elkhorn, it steadily decreases in the valley of the Merrimac and Roanoke. During the decade in which Nebraska more than quadrupled its inhabitants, five states once as prosperous as this saw their population diminish. The men who came here to seek fresh fields and pastures new, left behind exhausted fields and pastures old. During the years in which this new state received golden medals for her golden apples, that old orchard country which furnished cider to the boys who beat back the British regulars in 1776, almost ceased to produce fruit. Fortunate it was that Nebraska in 1869 produced one thousand seven hundred twenty-nine bushels of wheat for each hundred of her people, for Rhode Island, once a wheat-exporting state, raised only three-tenths of a bushel for each hundred of her people, possibly a grain for each individual. Well was it that during the last decade the number of farms increased in the Western states, in Illinois, 59,493; in Iowa, 55,129; and in Kansas, 27,802; for during that period the number of improved farms decreased in several of the Eastern states, in Rhode Island, 38; in New Hampshire, 859; and in Massachusetts, 9,101.

Honor to the son of Nebraska who instituted "Arbor Day," for the sons of Maine have destroyed their magnificent forests to such an extent that Pennsylvania coal is used for warming farm-houses.

#### A LESSON FROM THE PAST.

The people in all newly-settled sections of the country are prone to indulge in the pleasant conceit that there was never a soil so productive as that they cultivate. The farmers in the present granary of this country, seemingly forget about the vessels Washington once loaded with the product of his estate, and the broad wheat-fields on the Schuyler farm, that were burned, lest they should supply an invading army with bread. There are old negroes in Virginia and Maryland, who have reached higher to "shuck" the ears of golden maize than any men were ever required to reach in doing the same work on this side of



the Missouri. There are young men in the valley of the Genesee and Shenandoah, who have cut with a sickle larger crops of wheat than were ever harvested by the reaper in the valley of the Platte or Arkansas. More potatoes to the acre; and larger pumpkins, as measured by the tape-line, have been gathered from the hill-sides along the Kennebec, than were ever grown on the plains by the Neosho.

Among the wasted, desolated sections of the East, grand in colonial history, one may see the evidences of former agricultural wealth. There stand the ruined mansions erected by the price of food products exported to the West Indies. Luxury once rioted on the produce of fruitful fields, where gaunt famine stalks to-day. Hospitality extended a generous welcome to many a splendid abode, which the tramp and beggar now pass by, as too dilapidated to afford the promise of a crust of bread. The nettle, thistle, and cockle-bur thrive in the gardens where the Cavaliers planted rare exotics a century ago; and the owl hoots in chambers that once resounded with the strains of melody. Rains have washed away the terraces built in front of beautiful villas overlooking the sea, and wild beasts devour their prey in cellars once stocked with the richest vintage of the Madeiras.

There are men now living who remember the time when each of the New England States produced sufficient corn and grain to supply the inhabitants. There are comparatively young men who were engaged in early life in driving beeves from Maine and New Hampshire to the markets of Montreal and Quebec. On a recent visit to one of those states, I was asked to express my preference for Texas or Canadian beef, as the market was supplied with both. This was in a town which my grandfather colonized, and where not only he, but nearly all the early settlers, amassed very respectable fortunes by legitimate farming. Their great mansions yet stand on the summits of hills, monuments of the former agricultural wealth of the country. They reared large families; erected great churches; endowed institutions of learning; and became wealthy by exporting grain, fruit, vegetables, and meat.

A time came, however, when an occasional grist of North River, Yellow-flat, or Horse-tooth corn, was ground in country mills. At first, these strange-looking kernels attracted great at-

tention, and were often taken home by patrons of the mills as curiosities to delight the eyes of children. But, at length, they became very common, and little girls no longer used them instead of beads to adorn their necks. Then came flour from the famous valley of the Genesee, and the people supposed it would continue to come from there. But the years were not many before the Genesee called on the Miami, the Miami on the Wabash, the Wabash on the Sangamon, and the Sangamon on the Des Moines for bread. Corn, oats, cotton, and tobacco, as well as "the plant of civilization," like the people who once raised these crops on the Eastern slope of the Alleghanies, have been constantly moving West.

#### WILL THE WEST TAKE WARNING?

Even the older sections of the fertile West are passing into a state of decline in the production of crops. No state east of Illinois now produces sufficient wheat to supply the inhabitants, if indeed any produces sufficient meat. Six years ago I attended a farmers' convention in Wisconsin, and the subject which received the most attention was the restoration of fertility to worn-out lands. Mr. Bateham, of Ohio, in a recent communication to the *Country Gentleman*, recites that many of the dairy farms in his state, which twenty years ago supported twenty-five cows, are able to sustain but ten at the present time.

What has become of that marvelous fertility which, in the remote or recent past, produced such wonderful crops of cereals, grass, cotton, and tobacco? Sold in the half-bushel, bale, or hog-head; hauled to the nearest station or landing; transported by railroad or steamer; devoured, worn out, or burned in domestic cities, or shipped across the seas. While our lands have been growing poorer, those in almost every country in Europe have been growing richer. During the period that the yield of wheat per acre in New York decreased one-half, the yield of the same grain in England was doubled.

Shall the history of American agriculture repeat itself here? Will the time come, in the existence of persons now living, when cattle will be driven from Idaho and wheat be brought from Oregon to feed the inhabitants of manufacturing villages along the banks of the Platte? Will the readers of Omaha papers, a century hence, find Nebraska farms advertised for sale

for less than half the cost of the improvements? Will the title, "Great American Desert," be again applied to a large portion of the territory of this fair state? Will it, must it, come to pass in a round of years, that some traveler from New England shall take his stand on the broken trunk of a cultivated cottonwood to sketch the ruins of deserted homes?

Time alone can tell. If the farmers in the new West pursue the same course that has been pursued by farmers in the old East, they must reasonably expect the same results. In everything the future will reproduce the past, the circumstances being the same. The laws of nature, unlike those of states and municipalities, are self-executing. You cannot rob the soil as men do a savings bank, and expect to escape punishment. It is very easy to raise money by the sale of buffalo bones and successive crops of wheat, but very difficult to replace the treasures that have been removed. The farmers in nearly every new section are so fond of declaring large and frequent dividends that they are very likely to destroy all their capital.

#### OTHER MODES OF EXHAUSTION.

But there are other ways of destroying the value of lands, that are infinitely worse than continued croppings. A note bearing ten per cent. interest will exhaust the resources of a farm faster than successive crops of tobacco and wheat. A mill-stone may not be a comfortable thing to have about one's neck, but the choice between that and a cut-throat or slip-noose mortgage is very slight. Creditors are harder to fight than prairie fires. Grasshoppers are not liable to come every year, but interest coupons put in an appearance with absolute regularity. Better have a dug-out, with content and a clear title, than a villa, whose plate-glass windows are darkened by a mortgage. Hope prompts a man to contract debts, but fear pursues him till they are paid. The farmer who raises a loan in order to improve his estate, generally impoverishes it in order to remove the indebtedness. The temptation to possess all the land within sight was first held out by an individual whose reputation none of us are ambitious to acquire.

#### METHODS OF EXHAUSTING COMMUNITIES.

Objectionable as is the practice common in all new sections of the country, of encumbering private property, the custom of loading communities with debts is infinitely worse. An individual has the undoubted right, however injudicious the act may be,



of mortgaging his own land. One may do as he chooses with his own; when it comes to encumbering all the property that is and is to be in a sparsely settled school district, township, county, or state, the case is different. Our fathers went to war with England because they were taxed without being represented. Who represent the persons who will be taxed to pay the bonds of some frontier county in this state, due forty years hence? The men who contracted the debts and who used the money will all be dead or gone to vote bonds in some county the other side of the Rocky mountains.

It has in all times been regarded as an enormity to rob the dead—persons who have left the world—but is it not quite as heinous to rob the unborn—innocents who have not yet come into the world? What right have any people to erect public buildings, subsidize railroads, lay sidewalks, purchase libraries, build bridges and grade turnpikes and charge up the accounts with compound interest to men whose mothers are sleeping in cradles? Long before these prospective taxpayers are old enough to derive any benefit from them, the buildings will be in decay, the railroads in bankruptcy, the sidewalks in the mud, the books in rag-bags, the bridges in ruins, while the turnpike will be abandoned or washed away.

I sympathize with the tender boy infant who learns, on arriving at the age of consciousness, that, in addition to suffering from teething, having the mumps, measles, chicken-pox, and the whole round of infantile diseases, he must devote many of the best years of his future life to earning money to pay the debts that some other boys' grandfathers contracted. It will be no marvel if he is a troublesome child, and frets, in view of having to pay for a courthouse occupied and ruined by politicians in a previous century.

#### CHARACTER OF PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS.

It is wise and well for a community, even if it is a newly settled one, to have fair town and county buildings, churches, and school-houses, providing the people are able to erect them without injustice to their individual needs and comforts. It is not the part of wisdom, however, to erect public edifices vastly superior to those occupied as dwellings. If this be done it will not afford an evidence of thrift and prosperity, but of public prodigality. An enterprising town is not necessarily one that is able to borrow



more money than it has property, both public and private, but one where the people are content to live within their income and who pay as they buy and build.

I once stood on the gilded dome of a towering court-house in an adjoining state and looked as far as the eye could reach over a succession of huts of turf and shanties of rough boards. But the sight pleased me not. I liked better what I saw in a neighboring county, where the people met to worship, administer justice and transact public business in an unpretending wooden building, that, ere this, has probably been converted into a warehouse or livery stable. I learned that the first county had an empty treasury, though the vault in the court-house was capacious, fire and burglar-proof, a large floating debt, and a bonded indebtedness of a fourth of a million dollars, while the second county had several thousand dollars in its treasury, had no outstanding obligations, had never issued a bond, and never intended to issue one.

I know not how Nebraska is situated in this respect, but I notice that Kansas has established an unenviable reputation in the matter of county and municipal indebtedness. I read not long since, as probably most of you did, how the free and enlightened citizens of one town, fearing that its creditors would seize property to satisfy judgments obtained for overdue bonds, quietly placed the burg, or rather the buildings that composed it, on wheels, drew the precious load to a piece of raw prairie, and there dumped it off. The creditors were surprised as well as enraged the next morning to find that the town had run away, leaving nothing behind but its debts. The example of these enterprising people will serve as a solemn warning to all bloated bondholders not to loan their money to a wooden town, lest haply it takes to itself wheels and rolls away.

Railroads are very convenient things, but it does not pay farmers to build one and give it to some corporation that will manage it to the detriment of the people that live along the line. Many counties in Kansas that are repudiating their bonds have found this out to their sorrow. It adds to the value of real-estate and to the price of farm products to have a manufacturing establishment located in the vicinity. But if it can only be obtained by the payment of a large bonus or subsidy it will be better to dispense with the luxury. A college or seminary may be of great advantage to a town; but if the citizens pay so much to se-

cure its location that they cannot afford to send their children to school; the institution will do them little good.

Railroads will come, manufactures will be erected, and colleges will be established without subsidies, as soon as there is sufficient patronage to support them. At the close of the late war a circus clown, performing in a southern city, gave this caution to the negroes who were listening to his jokes: "Don't all try to be white men in a minute." Many a frontier town requires to be warned against attempting to be like Boston in a day.

#### HAVE WE THE RIGHT TO BOAST?

As a people we have been very boastful of our growth and progress in material affairs. We devoted our centennial year to bragging. We declared in song and speech that no nation had ever amassed so much wealth in so short a time. By implication we claimed our prosperity as the result of our peculiar institutions, or as the fruit of our thrift, industry, and enterprise. We counted over how many new states had been added to the old thirteen. We showed how much new territory had been opened up to settlement. We made an inventory of everything within the boundaries of the country and credited ourselves with having produced it.

Some future historian or social scientist may take an altogether different view of how our wealth was acquired, and may claim that we have simply appropriated the bounties of nature. Some unborn Gibbon may recount how we passed over the fairest land in the world, like Goths and Vandals, taking to ourselves or destroying, not what other men had produced, but what God had made. It is certainly very easy to account for our physical prosperity on the ground of fortuitous circumstances, and to show that our advancement in material affairs is due almost entirely to physical causes.

What was the character of the climate, soil and natural productions of the land our fathers settled and their descendants have been taking possession of? As a rule, the average rain-fall is neither much greater nor much less than what is desired. There has not been a season since the country was first settled that a fair crop of farm products has not been raised. There are very few natural malarial districts in the entire country. The soil is fertile almost beyond comparison. In the South a bale of cotton or a ton of choice tobacco could be produced on an acre, while

in the North fifty bushels of wheat or seventy of corn were the ordinary yield of the same area of land. The forests contain almost everything valuable in the line of trees. One yields a bark that can be made into boats which are water-tight and so light that they may be carried on the head, while several afford a most delicious sugar. Some supply material for tanning, others pitch, tar and turpentine, and still others furnish the best ship timber ever discovered. The leaves of some and the bark of others are for the healing of the nations. Forests of equal value have rarely if ever been found.

The soil and climate were adapted not only to all the cultivated crops of Europe but to many others. A great variety of valuable indigenous plants were found, some wild, others, as corn and tobacco, cultivated by the natives. Tobacco was in immediate and extensive demand in Europe at almost fabulous prices. No crop is of as much value to new settlers as Indian corn. A handful of seed will produce grain enough to supply a person with excellent food for a year. No country was ever discovered containing so many desirable plants as the territory embraced in the United States.

The forests as well as the grassy plains teemed with game of every description—enough on each square mile to fill Noah's ark: There was scarcely an animal not valuable for food that was not valuable for its fur. The first cargoes of furs sent to England brought very high prices. Even to-day an expert hunter or trapper can gain a good livelihood and lay up money anywhere on the frontier by following the occupation of Daniel Boone or his remote ancestor Nimrod. In addition to all the wild animals, the woods in many parts of the country were full of hogs, while the great plains swarmed with cattle and horses, the progeny of those brought over by the early Spanish explorers.

Such finny wealth as this country possessed was never known since the time those favored fishermen drew their nets at the command of their Master. The water along the coast was literally alive with cod, hake, mackerel, halibut, herring and blue fish. During the spring the rivers swarmed with salmon and shad—dainties fit to set before the king. At least a dozen varieties of excellent fish were found in all the lakes, while trout almost without number sported in the little brooks.



The territory of the United States is exceedingly well adapted to commerce. Although occupying the central portion of a continent, more than two-thirds of the frontier are the shores of oceans or navigable lakes. Its ocean coast represents a distance of more than half the circumference of the earth. If we add to this the length of the coast of the great lakes and the length of the rivers that may be navigated, we have a distance about twice that of the circumference of the globe. In many parts of the country there is a choice of two or three river routes, each running in a different direction.

Portions of this territory, so healthful, so fertile, so well watered by the rains of heaven and the rivers of earth, so well supplied with timber, so well stocked with fish, game and animals, waiting to be re-domesticated, and withal so well adapted to inland and foreign commerce, have during all our history been at the disposal of every one who chose to move upon them. The maximum price of our public lands has been \$1.25 per acre, while in point of fact most of our national domain has been given away.

There seems to be no good reason why people should not be land-owners when every one can have a plantation by claiming it. Why should not every man have as many horses as Bonner or Solomon, when he has naught to do but to catch them with a lasso and brand them as his own? Why should not the wish of the French king, that every peasant have a chicken in his pot, be verified in a region where better chickens than he ever dreamed of run in flocks through the waving grass? Why should we not eat more beef than the English do, when we have only to spot an animal and shoot it at sight?

Young as our country is, and rich as it was in natural resources of every kind, it is to-day presenting many evidences of decline in prosperity. Immigration has nearly stopped and emigration has begun. The papers of Great Britain speak of the large number of settlers arriving there from America. Contractors find it to their advantage to engage mechanics in New York and to pay their passage across the Atlantic. Once remittances from this country to Ireland and Germany were constant. Now in many sections of the country the matter is reversed. The persons who remained at home are sending funds to distressed relatives here.



The commerce of a country favorably situated to engage in navigation, furnishes one of the best evidences of prosperity, while a loss in commerce is a certain proof of decline. Emerson, commenting on the prosperity of England, says: "The foundations of its greatness are the rolling waves. More than the diamond kohinoor which glitters among their crown jewels, they prize that dull pebble, which is wiser than a man, whose poles turn themselves to the poles of the world, and whose axis is parallel to the axis of the world." "Forty thousand ships," he adds, "are entered in Lloyds' lists." Our poet-philosopher marvels not that all Englishmen join in the vaunt of Pope:

"Let India boast her palms; nor envy we  
The weeping amber, nor the spicy tree,  
Since by our oaks, these precious loads are borne,  
And realms commanded which these trees adorn."

In 1776 we complained of the King of England "for cutting off our trade with all parts of the world," and went to war about it. Quite recently we gave up that trade without striking a blow. Two years ago seventy per cent. of our exports and imports were transported in foreign bottoms, while fifteen years before, eighty per cent. of our commerce was carried in American vessels.

We have driven fish to foreign streams by building dams across our own. We have destroyed the water-power on hundreds of streams by cutting down the forests along their banks. We have increased the production of weeds, while we have diminished the yield of valuable plants. We have wantonly destroyed harmless birds, so that harmful insects come in clouds to destroy our cultivated crops. Not content with killing the hen that laid the golden egg, we are pursuing the turkey, goose, and duck that lay eggs of silver, nickel and copper.

It is true we have built many thousands of miles of railroad; and it is also true that the history of their construction and management is a reproach to the nation. We have many public works and public buildings constructed by borrowed money. We have many infant manufactures, that are being brought up by the fashionable process of wet nursing, and some that have reached mature years, which are constantly sending forth a baby-cry for assistance. We have increased very rapidly in population, but no class has increased so fast as tramps and paupers. We have much voluntary industry, and much enforced idleness. We have expended

tens of millions on courts of justice, jails, and prisons, but life and property were never as insecure as now. At the close of the most bountiful harvest ever gathered, there will be more persons demanding the bread of charity than were ever known before. Growth and decay are nearer together with us, as respects both space and time, than in any country in the civilized world.

CONCLUSION.

In the arch of the firmament that spans this beautiful state let the star of empire pause in its western course. In its effulgent beams let a better and grander civilization develop than the world has ever known. Let the errors that appear in the past history of other communities have no place in the future history of this commonwealth. Let the follies and vices that have served to bring other portions of the country into disrepute operate to insure wisdom and virtue here.

Men of Nebraska, you have appropriated the last portion of the national domain that is naturally adapted to general agriculture. You have settled upon a soil productive almost beyond comparison. It behooves you to guard well the treasure you have taken in your possession. It becomes you to reverse the order of proceedings that others have followed out, to give to posterity this beautiful region in better condition than you received it.

Over this soil which has accumulated fertility for untold centuries, may the ears of corn rise higher during each successive year. In this air purified by yonder mountains, skirted by evergreens and capped by snow—may the grassy pennons wave thicker every season they are unfurled. And may the formation of the society which I have had the honor to address, mark an epoch in the history of American agriculture, the commencement of the era of progress and reform.



